

## Scrapbook, from March 29, 1939, to May 21, 1939

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY REQUESTS THE PLEASURE OF THE  
COMPANY OF AT A SPECIAL PREVIEW OF THE STORY OF ALEXANDER GRAHAM  
BELL A TWENTIETH CENTURY-FOX MOTION PICTURE

CONSTITUTION HALL WEDNESDAY EVENING, MARCH THE TWENTY-NINTH  
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-NINE AT HALF AFTER EIGHT O'CLOCK

R.S.V.P. TO THE PRESIDENT NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY SIXTEENTH  
STREET AT M

**National Geographic Society WASHINGTON D. C. *A Special Preview of the Motion  
Picture "THE STORY OF ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL"***

Through the courtesy of Twentieth Century-Fox, the National Geographic Society has the honor to present, at a special preview in Constitution Hall on Wednesday evening, March twenty-ninth, at half after eight, the motion picture, "ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL", portraying the thrilling romance of the invention of the telephone.

It is particularly appropriate that this picture should be viewed publicly for the first time by members and guests of the National Geographic Society because of the long and close association of Dr. Alexander Graham Bell with The Society (President 1898–1903 and Trustee until his death in 1922), and the fact that his father-in-law, Honorable Gardiner Greene Hubbard, who plays a prominent part in the story, was The Society's first President, 1888–1897.

Members and guests will be taken back to Boston in the year 1874, when a young teacher of phonetics in Boston University, Alexander Graham Bell, was devising electrical apparatus for transmitting several telegraph messages simultaneously over a wire.

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Gardiner Greene Hubbard, one of Boston's leading citizens, hears of Bell's success in teaching the deaf to speak and engages him to give lessons in elocution to his deaf daughter, lovely Mabel Hubbard. Bell falls in love with Mabel and strives to invent a means to enable her to hear. He fails, but his experiments and researches in vocal physiology and electricity reveal the wonderful secret of how speech may be transmitted electrically.

The young inventor spends all of his earnings on equipment, but, encouraged by Mabel Hubbard, struggles on until eventually he sends spoken words over a wire, and the telephone is born.

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Dramatically described is the inventor's demonstration of the telephone before Queen Victoria and how her acceptance of the telephone for Buckingham Palace helped to bring it before the public.

The picture was produced under the direction of Darryl F. Zanuck. It includes only the dramatic years which Bell devoted to the telephone.

Many biographical details were supplied by Dr. Gilbert Grosvenor, President, National Geographic Society, Mrs. Gilbert Grosvenor, daughter of Dr. Bell, and by Melville Bell Grosvenor, Assistant Editor of the National Geographic Magazine. All three went to

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Hollywood, California, at the invitation of the producers, to cooperate in the production of the film.

Twentieth Century-Fox Presents Darryl F. Zanuck's *production of* "THE STORY OF ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL"

### **PRODUCTION STAFF**

Director Irving Cummings

Associate Producer Kenneth MacGowan

Screen Play by Lamar Trotti

Original Story by Ray Harris

Photography Leon Shamroy

Musical Direction Louis Silvers

### **CAST**

Alexander Graham Bell Don Ameche

Mabel Hubbard Loretta Young

Thomas Watson Henry Fonda

Gardiner Greene Hubbard Charles Coburn

Thomas Sanders Gene Lockhart

Mrs. Hubbard Spring Byington

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Gertrude Hubbard Sally Young Blane

Grace Hubbard Polly Ann Young

Berta Hubbard Georgiana Young

George Sanders Bobs Watson

Judge Harry Davenport

Mrs. MacGregor Elizabeth Patterson

*A Cosmopolitan Picture*

*Mabel Hubbard and Alexander Graham Bell in their garden at Baddeck, Nova Scotia—August, 1908. "The Story of Alexander Graham Bell"*

**THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY and TWENTIETH CENTURY—FOX Present  
DARRYL F. ZANUCK'S Production of " The Story of Alexander Graham Bell "  
Constitution Hall March 29th, 1939 at 8:30 o'clock**

Alexander Graham Bell as a young man—"American by choice"

THROUGH the courtesy of Twentieth Century-Fox, the National Geographic Society has the honor to present at a special preview the thrilling romance of the invention of the telephone.

It is particularly appropriate that this picture should be viewed publicly for the first time by members and guests of the National Geographic Society because of the long and close association of Dr. Alexander Graham Bell with The Society (President 1898–1903 and Trustee until his death in 1922), and the fact that his father-in-law, Honorable Gardiner Greene Hubbard, was The Society's first President, 1888–1897.

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The picture was produced under the supervision of Darryl F. Zanuck. It includes only the dramatic years which Alexander Graham Bell devoted to the telephone.

Irving Cummings, the able director, has caught realistically the spirit of this remarkable couple. His task was unusually difficult because the heroine, Mabel Hubbard, was deaf. In 1874, she was one of only two people in the United States who could “hear” by reading the lips.

Many biographical details were supplied and little personal mannerisms suggested by Dr. Gilbert Grosvenor, President, National Geographic Society, Mrs. Gilbert Grosvenor, daughter of Dr. Bell, and by Melville Bell Grosvenor, Assistant Editor of the National Geographic Magazine. All three went to Hollywood, California, at the invitation of the producers, to cooperate in the production of the film.

Mrs. Grosvenor sits at her Grandfather Hubbard's desk, surrounded by her “family.” Right to left, her father (Don Ameche), grandfather (Charles Coburn), mother (Loretta Young), and grandmother (Spring Byington). At extreme left, is Irving Cummings, the director, and behind him stands Melville Bell Grosvenor.

Mrs. Bell watches the lips of her husband to learn of his hydrofoil boat experiments—  
Baddeck, 1916

### **PRODUCTION STAFF**

Director Irving Cummings

Associate Producer Kenneth MacGowan

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### **CAST**

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Mabel Hubbard Loretta Young

Thomas Watson Henry Fonda

Gardiner Greene Hubbard Charles Coburn

Thomas Sanders Gene Lockhart

Mrs. Hubbard Spring Byington

Gertrude Hubbard Sally Young Blane

Berta Hubbard Polly Ann Young

Grace Hubbard Georgianna Young

George Sanders Bobs Watson

Barrows Russell Hicks

Chauncey Smith Paul Stanton

President Western Union Jonathan Hale

Judge Harry Davenport

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Queen Victoria Beryl Mercer

Mrs. MacGregor Elizabeth Patterson

George Pollard Charles Trowbridge

Mrs. Sanders Zeffie Tilbury

A Cosmopolitan Ten-Reel Picture

*Henry Fonda as Thomas Watson, electrical assistant, and Don Ameche, as Alexander Graham Bell, in the Boston workshop where the telephone was born (upper left).*

*On set in Hollywood (upper right). Left to right, Melville Bell Grosvenor, Mrs. Gilbert Grosvenor, Irving Cummings (director), Don Ameche and Dr. Gilbert Grosvenor.*

*Mrs. Grosvenor with Bobs Watson, who plays George Sanders, the little deaf boy Bell taught to speak (left).*

*The four Youngs as the Hubbard sisters. Loretta (right) plays Mabel Hubbard, Georgianna, the youngest (lower), portrays Grace Hubbard, now Mrs. Charles J. Bell, of Washington, D. C. Polly Ann (left) takes the part of Berta, and Sally Blane, that of Gertrude Hubbard.*

*Miss Young (lower left) receives from Mrs. Grosvenor the pearl brooch which was the gift of Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard on their wedding day, July 11, 1877. Miss Young wears the cross in the London and courtroom scenes.*

*Lower right—"Alec and Mabel."*

**WASHINGTON STAR — March 30, 1939 Bell's Work and Romance Make Impressive Film**

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### Story of Phone Invention Is Told In Effective Terms Before Distinguished Preview Crowd

By JAY CARMODY.

Lives of great men often come a cropper when they are dramatized on stage or screen. That of Alexander Graham Bell may be written down as an exception. The film biography of the inventor of the telephone, unfolded last night before a distinguished audience at Constitution Hall under the auspices of the National Geographic Society, is a picture worthy of its subject. It finds the warmth of a great life, that of a man who spent himself mercilessly on a tremendous task, but who found time always to be romantic, gentle, compassionate. As Twentieth Century-Fox has told his story, Dr. Bell never was a man to let the big thing of his life crush the small ones that so vastly enrich experience.

Relatives, among them three who acted as advisers to the studio, old friends and leaders in all walks of life participated in the special local preview which was held coincidentally with the world premiere of the film at the San Francisco Exposition.

The picture, starring Don Ameche in the title role and Loretta Young as Mabel Hubbard, later Mrs. Bell, deals with those dramatic years during which Dr. Bell was working upon his great invention. No cold, dull tale of the laboratory is it for all its technical aspects. Counterpointing the basic theme is the love story the inventor and pretty Miss Hubbard, a narrative which loses none of its humanness for being told with becoming dignity.

Lamar Trotti, who produced the screen script for Darryl Zanuck, does his subject the courtesy of never trying to make him look superhuman. The consequence is that Ameche has an opportunity to play a character whose proportions include the faults as well as the virtues of the dreamer. Dr. Bell is revealed as a man who could be weak as well as strong, who could be discouraged as well as confident and unafraid; who could—at moments—count the invention of the telephone well lost for love. It is a much more impressive portrait than that idealized one which so often strains off the qualities that make the hero



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recognizable as a man. It should help to popularize scientists, who have been pretty sadly overlooked in the vast concern to popularize their works.

The story of Dr. Bell's life during the period of the invention is unfolded in an orderly, simple fashion. He is introduced as the teacher of speech, the humanist who dares to dream that he can teach the dumb to talk, who undertakes the instruction of a child mute to demonstrate the case to himself. At the time Dr. Bell also is working on the telegraph, his experiments finally winning the support of Gardiner Greene Hubbard a solid citizen who presides over a family of four comely daughters. With one of them Dr. Bell falls in love. Not only for him, but for every one who uses the telephone today, that turns out to be a very happy eventuality, for whenever his own strength of purpose and patience are exhausted, Mabel Hubbard's resources of both come to the rescue.

The tender relationship between the two is one of the screen's better latter-day romances. Neither Miss Young, whose three sisters appear as the other Hubbard girls, nor Mr. Ameche has had such effective material in many films. Both take excellent advantage of their opportunities.

Without pressing for it in the slightest, the film has managed to achieve some excellent, unaffected comedy. The two characters who provide most of it are Mr. Hubbard, played by Charles Coburn and Tom Watson. Bell's assistant, played by Henry Fonda. Mr. Hubbard is a gentleman who lives by the clock, whose every day is divided into little segments of habit, with which nothing must interfere. His constant conflict with time and events is full of droll results. Fonda, whose comedy talents Hollywood has not bothered greatly to discover, gives a really fine performance as the young electrician whose devotion to Dr. Bell cannot keep him from constantly protesting the dullness of a life devoted to attic laboratory work.

The general excellence of its interpretation helps the film most notably at its climax where license has been taken with court procedure to allow Mr. Ameche to plead his own case.

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He gives such conviction to his plea for the small inventor—during his fight with the powerful interests that would brand him liar and thief instead of benefactor—that one overlooks the fact that the circumstances are quite unusual.

In addition to an honest, sincere story given an honest, sincere interpretation. "The Life of Alexander Graham Bell." has the virtue of excellent production. Mr. Zanuck and his staff have done one of the better jobs of biography, usually one of the most difficult subjects with which the movies deal.

An audience of between 3,000 and 4,000 persons attended the preview....Most notable among them was Mrs. Gilbert Grosvenor, daughter of Dr. Bell and wife of the president of the National Geographic Society....Mrs. Grosvenor's entrance was the occasion of a warm tribute of applause on the part of the audience....The audience, incidentally, paid respectful heed to the notice on its tickets that the preview would begin promptly at 8:30....Hollywood preview tickets say the same thing, and the audience allows an hour to an hour and a half for its disbelief in the statement....The local preview crowd was prompt....And so was the opening of the picture....Very brief were the remarks of Dr. Grosvenor in expressing his thanks to the audience for its attendance and to the producing studio for the right to show the film as a courtesy to Mrs. Grosvenor....Other members of the family, representing three generations, were Melville Bell Grosvenor, grandson of the inventor; Dr. Mabel Grosvenor, Mrs. Walter Kendall Myers and Gloria Grosvenor, granddaughters; Helen Grosvenor, Alexander Graham Bell Grosvenor and Gilbert Melville Grosvenor, great-grandchildren....Another interested group was that composed of distinguished scientist who attended the famous Wednesday evening meetings at Dr. Bell's residence here during the 30 years prior to his death in 1922.

### **WASHINGTON STAR — March 30, 1939 Photoplay Miracle**

A Washington audience, gathered in Constitution Hall last evening, witnessed a miracle in pictures and in sound. "The Story of Alexander Graham Bell" was told in shadows on

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a screen made lifelike by the genius of a great contemporary. Some of those present may have remembered that the inventor of the telephone was born less than a month after the inventor of the phonograph and the kinetographic camera. The two men were complementary in more respects than one. Working along parallel lines, they may be said to have fathered a new age and a new civilization.

But Mr. Bell was the nearer to the people of the Nation's Capital. He established his residence here in 1873 and always considered the city his home up to the hour of his death, in 1922. His earliest experiments in telephonic communication were encouraged by Joseph Henry of the Smithsonian Institution; his claims to be “the discoverer of the only way that speech can be transmitted electrically” were confirmed by the Supreme Court of the United States “after the most prolonged and important litigation in the history of American patent law his charities included foundation gifts to the American Association for the Promotion of the Teaching of Speech to the Deaf, the Volta Bureau for the Increase and Diffusion of Knowledge Relating to the Deaf, the Aerial Experiment Association, the Astrophysical Observatory and the magazine *Science*, which now is the official organ of the American Association for the Advancement of Science—all centered in Washington originally.

To Mr. Bell also may be traced the prosperity and world-wide services of the National Geographic Society, of which he was president from 1896 to 1904 and for which he formulated the plan of operation which increased the membership from a few hundred to more than a million. His honors included degrees from the George Washington University and Gallaudet College. Indeed, the whole community was benefited by and learned to love him. His house in Connecticut avenue at Du Pont Circle was a national shrine while yet he dwelt within its walls. There flowered his rich career of useful and helpful labor.

The photoplay dramatization of Mr. Bell's achievement does not tell everything. But it is a marvelous production, in the sense that it demonstrates the spiritual and social motives which prompted his endeavors and earned him immortality. In it he lives again by

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providential grace of science and art collaborating to the end that nobleness of purpose and humane aspiration may not perish among the children of earth.

### **THE TIMES-HERALD, WASHINGTON, D. C. MARCH 30, 1939 [???] Kelleygrams Love Story of 'Alexander Graham Bell' Is Warm and Tender Motion Picture**

**By ANDREW R. KELLEY**

California and Washington joined hands last night for the world premiere of "The Story of Alexander Graham Bell," a picture well worthy of this unusual distinction.

At Treasure Island and the Pacific World Fair, 200 Hollywood columnists and critics were the special guests of the producers for the initial screening. Here in Washington, in historic Constitution Hall, 4,000 gathered under the sponsorship of the National Geographic Society, representing official life, scientists, educators and society, for the special invitation opening.

They saw a motion picture in which the romance of business and the heart have been magically entwined, one that stirred the emotions through the tenderness, warmth and beauty of a great love story, one that told in the most entrancingly realistic manner the history of a great invention.

All the resources of Hollywood have been poured into this recreation of a great man's heart and mind, Alexander Graham Bell. The story begins when the youthful inventor was living in humble lodgings on Newton Street, Boston, and first awakened to the great possibilities in the transmission of sound.

### **Romance and Business**

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Young Bell, played by Don Ameche, was primarily interested in the telegraph and teaching of the deaf and dumb. Then he met Mabel Hubbard and the entire course of his life was changed.

Mabel, played by Loretta Young, was the daughter of Thomas Greene Hubbard, a cold, methodical and upright Bay State financier. He was interested in backing Bell's experiments with the telegraph, but had little faith in his dreams of the telephone. Neither did he regard him as the right prospect for his daughter's hand.

Mabel Hubbard had been terribly handicapped, when scarlet fever left her deafness as an aftermath. She had overcome her deficiency by learning how to "hear" by reading the lips, one of the two persons in the United States to acquire this substitute for a natural sense.

Their's was love at first sight, and enduring. When young Bell was sick and discouraged, oppressed by debt, and about to give up his research, it was Mabel who urged him on.

Ironically enough, it was a love letter that he wrote to her when their romance was undergoing stress, which proved the turning point in his career, saved his invention, and his future. It was a real heart message, reading:

**"My Dearest One:—**

**"Ever since I held you in my arms, I've Known. My invention must be given up. This is little enough to do if it means that I may call you sweetheart and wife. The telephone will be born some day. And I do not care who gets the glory if the world gets the benefit. With all my heart, I am yours,**

**(Signed) "ALECK."**

DON AMECHE

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This letter, sent in June, 1875, was the means of establishing Bell's priority claim to the patent, proved the inventor had been working on his pet before other claimants.

### **In Superbly Acted**

Scenes that will mist your eyes show young Alexander Graham Bell's successful efforts to give the mute boy, George Sanders, the voice he had been denied from birth.

The epic moment on March 10, 1876, when Bell and his co-worker, Thomas Watson (played by Henry Fonda), found the telephone was a practical reality, has been graphically pictured.

They were working in an attic hovel with a new transmitter when the accidental spilling of acid evolved into the missing link for the inventor. Bell, suffering from acid burns, cried: "Mr. Watson, come here. I want you." They registered on the receiver of Watson in the adjoining room, thus became the first words spoken over the modern telephone.

All this has been most impressively told by the cameras and microphones, ingeniously flavored with romantic spice, as Mabel's three younger sisters watch the development of her romance.

Producer Daryl Zanuck has given "The Story of Alexander Graham Bell," the benefit of sagacious casting. Don Ameche makes a most convincing inventor, and his moments when tender urge is dominant are sequences that glow with fervor and conviction.

Loretta Young has never looked prettier, nor played with finer spirit. Her love scenes must be played while she is watching the lips of her suitor, but the exchanges have been so cleverly contrived they are passionately real.

### **Notables Pressed**

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A splendid supporting cast includes Charles Coburn, Henry Fonda, Gene Lockhart, Spring Byington, Harry Davenport, Elizabeth Patterson, and the juvenile, Bobs Watson.

Present last night as the story of Dr. Bell's history-making achievement was unfolded were three generations of his descendants: Mrs. Grosvenor; Melville Bell Grosvenor, a grandson; Dr. Mabel Grosvenor, Mrs. Walter Kendall Myers and Gloria Grosvenor, granddaughters, and Helen Grosvenor, Alexander Graham Bell Grosvenor and Gilbert Melville Grosvenor, great grandchildren.

Other relatives of Dr. Bell in the audience were Mrs. Melville Bell Grosvenor, Dr. Walter Kendall Myers, Mr. and Mrs. Graham Kerr, Miss Anita Kerr, Mrs. William Kerr, Dr. and Mrs. Harry H. Kerr, Mrs. James Kerr, Mr. and Mrs. Dion Kerr, Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Laing, Mr. and Mrs. Charles McIlvane Harris, Miss Aileen Harris, Mrs. Charles M. Marsh, Miss Betty Marsh, Miss Genevieve Marsh, Miss Theodora McCurdy, Mr. and Mrs. Rulien A. Ripley, jr.

### **Washington Post, May 14, 1939 'Bell' and 'Union Pacific' Lead Week of Notable Film Offerings**

Biographical Drama and Historical Epic Are Augmented by New Thriller and Holdovers;  
Press-Agency Has Changed Since Old Days

By Nelson B. Bell.

THE SIMPLE CHARM, dignity and sincerity with which a biographical play may be imbued, under proper auspices, never has been more clearly or more forcefully exemplified than in the case of the Twentieth Century-Fox production of "The Story of Alexander Graham Bell" now on the screen at Loew's Palace Theater.

Given a distinguished preview screening by the National Geographic Society, in Constitution Hall a few weeks ago, the picture at that time elicited warmest encomiums from both press and as many of the public as Constitution Hall was able to accommodate.

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There are many obvious reasons for this pre-eminence of a film play dealing with a great character, well known and beloved in Washington up to the time of his death in 1922—intelligent and thoughtful script treatment of persons and events with which it was hardly permissible to take dramatic license. exceptionally judicious casting, variety of mood and movement and photography of the highest order. These, however, I think do not comprise the chief element of appeal that projects itself from the screen into the consciousness of an audience.

I prefer to believe that it is the homely honesty, the intensely sympathetic human quality and the lyric beauty of its love story, in perfectly blended combination, that make “The Story of Alexander Graham Bell” the splendid picture that it is.

We have dealt frequently before upon the many diverse arts and crafts that enter into the completion of a finished feature picture. There are, I believe, some 172 of them. It is only when they are co-ordinated with precise artistic and mechanical skill that a genuinely great picture results. “The Story of Alexander Graham Bell” may not write itself down as a great picture at the box-office, but in the mind of every spectator who views it, it will leave an indelible impression of reality and supreme virtue as a vital human document. That is an achievement of which Producer Darryl F. Zanuck may well be proud.

“The Story of Alexander Graham Bell” already has been previewed and reviewed in these columns of The Post. We, therefore, shall not at this time go again into the superlative performances contributed to the excellence of the film by one of the most adroitly chosen ensembles ever assembled, or any of the other conventional aspects of the production, but will be content to say merely that here is a biographical drama which, once seen, probably never will be forgotten.

**Boston Traveler, May 5, 1939 Story of the Telephone At the Keith Memorial**

**By HELEN EAGER**



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Darryl F. Zanuck, who seems to favor biographical films on historical characters, has chosen Alexander Graham Bell for the production now at the Keith Memorial. In the person of Don Ameche, "The Story of Alexander Graham Bell" reveals to filmgoers the privations, heart-aches and disappointments attendant on the birth of the instrument everyone now takes so much for granted. The picture shows how Bell and his assistant and good friend, Thomas Watson, barely existed on cheese and apples while working on the instrument whose principal Bell accidentally stumbled across, trying to think of some way whereby his deaf sweetheart could hear.

The first words spoken over a wire, "Mr. Watson! Come here! I want you!" and miraculously heard by Watson in the next room are dramatically pictured. Bell's discouraging exhibition in Salem, after which the listeners left the hall laughing in derision, is brightened by faith in him expressed by Gardiner Hubbard, his sweetheart's father, and Thomas Sanders, the father of a deaf mute Bell has aided.

The invention soon becomes world-wide news and when Queen Victoria invites Bell to come to London to give her a demonstration, he and his Mabel are married. After the demonstration, she commands that Buckingham palace be equipped with telepliones. Bell's future seems insured. Then he hears that Western Union has installed hundreds of telephones and sued Bell for infringement of their patent.

The courtroom scene is a climax which ends in no decision except that Mrs. Bell must immediately get to a hospital for the birth of her child. Later Western Union apologizes to Bell and offers him its vast resources for one-fifth interest in his company.

The story of the telephone shares footage with the romance between Bell and Mabel Hubbard. Mr. Ameche is not required to do very much acting as Bell and does what he is called upon with his customary agreeableness. Loretta Young is quite charming as the deaf Mabel. Henry Fonda contributes a fine portrayal as Watson. Excellent characterizations are Charles Coburn's Hubbard and Gene Lockhart's Sanders. There is a

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moment of affecting pathos when Sanders' deaf and dumb child, skillfully played by Bobs Watson, proves the benefits of Bell's teaching by painfully pronouncing "F-a-a-ther." Spring Byington is delightful as Mrs. Hubbard and Miss Young's sisters, Sally Blane, Polly Ann Young and Georgianna Young appear briefly as younger Hubbards.

LORETTA YOUNG, as the deaf Mabel Hubbard, wife of the telephone inventor, in the Palace's biographical film, "The Story of Alexander Graham Bell"

### **A Cinema Week in Which You Can't Go Wrong**

THE GOOD THINGS available to Washington theatergoers this week, wordy evidence to the contrary notwithstanding, do not end with "The Story of Alexander Graham Bell" and "Union Pacific." There is not a motion picture on view in the midcity, first-run area that does not offer rich repayment in entertainment to all who view it. Not all are new, but none is bad.

With Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce in the principal roles, Loew's Capitol Theater breaks out the only other new downtown exhibit in "The Hound of the Baskervilles," a new picturization of the A. Conan Doyle mystery-thriller, that may be relied upon for a quick chilling of the spine and stiffening of the hair. The holdover films are of genuine note—else, in all probability, they would not be holdovers.

"The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle"—bearing a striking resemblance to "Alexander Graham Bell" in the form of its title—has struck the expected nostalgic note among those who can remember back to 1911 and continues a second week at RKO-Keith's. "Wuthering Heights," Samuel Goldwyn's incomparably fine picturization of the Emily Bronte novel, has moved into the Columbia, with Merle Oberon and Laurence Olivier in the pivotal roles, and Bette Davis continues her first-run triumph in "Dark Victory" at the Metropolitan. Not one of these but is a superlative film.

Better get going to some of them before the weather gets too hot.

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Washington Post, May 19, 1939

*Did you know that Twentieth Century is re-shooting added scenes for "Alexander Graham Bell" for the Canadian market? They forgot to include his life up there. Canada wouldn't accept it without.*

### **THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS DALLAS, TEXAS, SUNDAY, MAY 21, 1939 NOTES ON THE PASSING SHOW Story of Alexander Graham Bell Introduces Screen's Interest in Romance of Invention**

BY JOHN ROSENFELD.

THE MOVIES HAVE DISCOVERED the American frontier, as you know, and have exploited it for fully as much increment as did the land speculators and railroaders of the last century. Having won the West for itself and the American cinema audiences, Hollywood is about to plunge into the industrial development of the continent to deal with the period of great invention and its effect on mankind.

Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone, is the first subject of this gallery. The producer is Darryl Zanuck of Twentieth Century-Fox whose contribution last year was the historical musical Alexander's Ragtime Band. The two Alexanders with the initial B for band and bell are too much for movie booking offices. The new picture is usually called Alexander's Ragtime Bell, but this, we assure you, is merely confusion.

The Zanuck version is naturally pared and angled for movie purposes and we do not dare assume responsibility for its authenticity. Therefore, to explain the story of this important picture we append the official Twentieth Century-Fox synopsis and interpretation without attempt to claim authorship.

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It is the story of an obscure young scientist, his discouraging struggles, his invention of the telephone, his battle against public ridicule and powerful opponents and his ultimate triumph—the flame of his genius kept alight by the love and faith of a young girl.

Don Ameche portrays Bell in the film, with Loretta Young as Mabel Hubbard and Henry Fonda as Tom Watson, Bell's assistant.

### **The World Laughed**

Young Alexander Graham Bell (he was only 29 when he invented the telephone) was at first ridiculed by an unbelieving world, an experience which seems to be the lot of all dreamers. “Crackpot” and “fool” were the least of the epithets hurled at the kindly young teacher of the deaf when he offered the world the miracle of talking through a wire. For Bell was not a professional scientist; in fact, engineers have said that if he had known anything about electricity he never could have invented the telephone!

Bell's interest in electricity began with his work on a telegraphic invention which he believed would help the deaf learn to speak. Aiding the deaf was his one interest in life; during all of it he remained their teacher. He was born a member of a cultured Scottish family especially interested in teaching the art of speech. To that work his father, his grandfather, his uncle and two of his brothers had devoted themselves. When he came to settle in Boston, Mass., Bell taught the deaf.

In addition to his cultured background the young man had inventive ability. As a mere boy he built an ingenious apparatus, concealed in a crude head of gutta percha, into which he blew with a bellows and manipulated to produce uncanny sounds that resembled words.

Later, when the telephone was an accepted success, Bell invented a “telephonic probe” which proved an invulnerable aid to military surgeons. With this probe, which predated the X ray by about ten years, bullets or other bits of metal could be located in the human body

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so that surgeons knew exactly where to operate. The machine was used on President Garfield in a futile attempt to save his life.

### **Makes Valuable Friends**

In the course of his teaching in Boston, Bell made two very close friends, Gardiner G. Hubbard and Thomas Sanders, two men who later helped the inventor start the telephone on the road to the 69,000,000 daily conversations the telephone carries today.

When he met Mabel Hubbard, Bell fell in love. This is the great romance that motivates the screen play. It was in her deafness that he found the inspiration for his miraculous invention. He examined an actual human ear and studied more carefully than ever the reception of sound. He saw how the membrane we call the eardrum responds to vibrations.

### **Cold and Hunger**

The young suitor's period of experimentation was marked by rigorous privation. He gave so much time to this work that his teaching income fell off considerably and with Tom Watson, his assistant, experienced the trials of cold and hunger. So discouraging was this struggle, which kept him from marrying Mabel, that on the very threshold of his great achievement he halted, ready to sacrifice it so he could be with the woman he loved.

To Mabel he wrote: "Ever since I held you in my arms, I've known! My invention must be given up. This is little enough to do if it means that I may call you sweetheart and wife! The telephone will be born someday—and I do not care one bit who gets the glory so long as the world gets the benefit—"

So poor was Alexander Bell that he could afford no stationery, and his letter had to be written on the back of a crumpled paper which bore crude sketches of experimental

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instruments! But later, when powerful opponents challenged Bell's patents, this letter was to bring victory out of certain defeat.

When Mabel Hubbard received the letter she refused to let Bell quit, much as she loved him. Back to his laboratory he went and with Watson embarked on a new and more intensive drive to discover the elusive secret. The struggle was greater than ever before, until on day, while pouring some acid into a battery, Bell spilled some and burned a hole in his pants.

"Mr. Watson! Come here! I want you!" Bell shouted. And, in another part of the house, Watson heard him through a wire! The telephone was born at that moment. It was the occasion for a wild war dance and excited whooping that brought the landlady upstairs to the bare attic with threats of dispossession. But the secret was found.

But now the real work had first begun. Bell and Watson built and discarded dozens of machines in their effort to improve upon their first crude instrument and make it commercially practical. Hubbard and Sanders almost ruined their own businesses in giving financial aid to the new venture.

One of Bell's first acts was to do the very thing the thought of which had spurred him on—he married Mabel. There followed an exciting period of introducing the new invention to the public, but the first results were very discouraging. People still laughed at the idea of talking through wire, even when in a series of lectures Bell sent not only speech but music over several miles of telegraph line. Here was the first broadcast more than a generation before the radio.

Hubbard and Sanders were nearing the end of their financial ropes, and the public still would not look upon the telephone as anything but a lecture-hall novelty, when an invitation came to demonstrate the marvelous instrument to Queen Victoria. Bell jumped at the opportunity and sailed immediately, accompanied by his wife.

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The Queen listened and was deeply impressed by the possibilities of the telephone. Her opinion was all that the invention needed. It made telephoning fashionable and the Bell Telephone Company was opened for business. But suddenly disaster struck—one of the great dramatic moment in the film.

### **Battle Dismays Bell**

Anxious to get something back on their investment which seemed a failure, Hubbard and Sanders had offered the Western Union Telegraph Company all the Bell patents for \$100,000, which was refused. (Two years later Western Union would gladly have bought those patents for \$25,000,000!) Then, unexpectedly, suit was brought against Bell and his friends for infringing on Western Union patents. The telegraph company, finding it hard to believe that a man who was not an electrician could have invented the telephone, searched for someone else who might have invented it and in the meantime produced their own instruments and competed with the Bell Telephone Company. The trial was a bitter affair and for a while Bell's cause seemed lost, since he had kept no notes and could not prove that he had plans for the telephone prior to June, 1876, when it was found that five other men were working on telephones.

Suddenly, Mabel, an expectant mother, turned up in court with the love letter Alexander had written her in June, 1875, on the back of which were his designs for the telephone. Western Union admitted Bell's priority and settled out of court. The fight was won.